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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: ITALY: PRODI LOSES KEY SENATE VOTE ON FOREIGN POLICY

REF: A. ROME 296
[B.](#) ROME 275
[C.](#) ROME 241

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor David D. Pearce for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[¶](#)1. (SBU) By a vote of 158 to 160, PM Prodi's government lost a key Senate vote on a motion supporting his government's foreign policy. Previously, FM D'Alema had stated that if the majority in the Senate could not support the government's foreign policy, it "should go home." Following the vote, PM Romano Prodi met with President Giorgio Napolitano to explain what had transpired in the Senate and to confer with him on the viability of his coalition, as well as on next steps. A variety of options, including Prodi's resignation, were under discussion. END SUMMARY.

[¶](#)2. (U) FM Massimo D'Alema appeared before the Italian Senate February 21 (REF A) to present the Prodi government's foreign policy agenda. At the conclusion of the debate, the governing coalition lost a vote by a margin of 158 - 160 on a motion presented by the majority which stated: "The Senate, having heard Minister D'Alema's statements on foreign policy, of which the fundamental lines are inspired by compliance with article 11 of the Constitution, the priority role of the European Union, relaunching the role of the United Nations, and respect for international alliances, approves."

[¶](#)3. (U) D'Alema had stated that if the majority in the Senate could not support the government's foreign policy, the government "should go home." At the conclusion of the vote, Forza Italia Senate Group leader Renato Schifani called for Prodi's resignation, a call subsequently repeated by former PM Silvio Berlusconi and other center-right leaders.

[¶](#)4. (C/NF) Following the vote, PM Romano Prodi met with President Giorgio Napolitano to explain to Napolitano what transpired in the Senate and to confer with him on the viability of his coalition. Napolitano had previously warned that any government should not need the support of the opposition in order to pass its foreign policy agenda.

[¶](#)5. (C/NF) COMMENT: Any Prodi government that would emerge from today's vote would certainly be extremely weak. It is not unthinkable that the PM will resign. D'Alema's statement that the government should resign if the vote failed led most observers to believe that he had carefully counted his votes and was sure of a victory. Even our center-right contacts had assumed this. However, Prodi's coalition commands only a one-seat majority in the Senate without the help of Senators

for Life, and that nine-party conglomeration has been facing growing discontent on its far-left and pacifist wing (REF B and C). So, D'Alema, and by extension Prodi, had very little room for error.

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